15 October 2019

Thank you for contributing to the recent debate on Human Rights: Future Trade on Thursday 3 October, in which you asked whether the Government plans to include specific statements, as Article 23.9 of the United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA) does, on protection for gender identity rights in the UK’s future Free Trade Agreements. I am sorry that I was unable to respond to you at the time and I promised to write to you.

The UK Government is committed to ensuring equality for all people, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. As set out in the Department for International Trade’s (DIT) annual report, we will ensure that our new, independent trade policy promotes equality, in line with our ambition to take a gender-responsive approach to trade when we leave the EU.

DIT is carefully considering the options available to ensure that our trade policy can help to promote equality. In July 2018 we launched four online public consultations, providing the public with an opportunity to give their views on potential future trade agreement negotiations with the USA, Australia, New Zealand and on the UK potentially seeking accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and we are currently running a call for input to better understand UK interests in an enhanced agreement with Japan, building on the EU-Japan EPA. We are currently considering our policy positions on these trade agreements - taking account of the public consultation, which was one of the largest ever conducted in the UK. As part of this policy development we are considering our approach to gender equality.

I hope you find this letter helpful. I have copied this letter to all Noble Lords who spoke during the debate and I will also place a copy in the House library.

BARONESS BERRIDGE

Baroness Barker
House of Lords